



Pata-perception; Topological Misadventures in Art and Climbing

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Dan Shipsides - Pataperception - Mountainsides Symposium

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'pata-perception

Topological misadventures in art and climbing

Dan Shipsides 2016

Mountainsides Symposium

Leeds Stage. Leeds University
2016

This represents one of a number of overlapping performance-talks where I explore the ideas ground in and around 'pata-physics and my own framework of pata-perception as a way to understand my artist method.

Each performance talk developes the concept:

Mountainsides Symposium, Leeds Univeristy, 2016
Kendal Mountain Festival, 2016
CMIT conference, Sheffield Hallam, 2017
Alternative University, UCU Queens Belfast, 2018

The images here are slides from a presentation which was part performed - part presented in an experimental artist talk style.

The text is just my talk notes and are not scripted or accurate to what was actually spoken. There is an audio recording (forthcoming) of the talk which could be used as the live commentary to navigate the images below.

Note; Each image will enlarge if you click on them and some will link to video.

Intro: HELLO!

Artist and climber based Belfast

The Stone Bridge. **PLAY VIDEO - and DANCE!**



So, what is 'pata-perception' **'PATA-PERCEPTION'**?

My coined term – and a term I'm developing...but it comes from:

'pataphysics

Serious creative play

Equivalence (everything is as serious as anything else - Laterality)

Anomaly (exceptions)

Antimony – Plus/Minus (gladly holding contradictions)

Syzygy (coming together of disparates)

Time / Space (anachronism) inconsistencies in how we imagine time (HG Wells - non linear narratives) and space (Cubism) + quantum science.

Humour – base and complex – from shitsticks to the absurdist. (Monty Python)

Pataphysics – 100years + What is 'pata-physics'?

Alfred Jarry (in Dr Faustroll written 1898 published posthumously 1911)

The science of imaginary solutions.

The science of the exception.

If 'the exception proves the rule' then we need to celebrate and embrace the exception. So 'pataphysics might be thought of as the science of the exceptional.

It has some key features or themes:

Equivalence (everything is as serious as anything else - Lateral) – level hierarchies of knowledge or value.

Anomaly (exceptions) **Antimony** – Plus/Minus (holding contradictions) – Christ /anti Christ, Yin / Yang

Syzygy (coming together of disparates) Time / Space (anachronism) inconsistencies in how we imagine space (cubism)

Time / Space. Quantum inconsistencies. Anachronistic

Humour – base and complex – from shitsticks juvenilia to the absurdist and poetically transcendent

It's attracted some of the most creative people from artists, musicians to writers to playwrights: Jarry, Duchamp, Calvino, Vian, Cage, John Lennon. Monty Python. Poetic method: Raymond Roussel

Rene Daumal's unfinished Mount Analogue: A Novel of Symbolically Authentic Non-Euclidean Adventure in Mountain Climbing (written 1939-44 – published posthumously in 1952 ...is a clear bridge to my interests in climbing.

So 'pataphysics for me unhinges artists from predictable or the orthodox ways of working. It's an antidote to the slavish and flawed logical rational world of academia and art – where ideas of desire, love, whim, play, compulsion and madness (the real drivers of life and art...!) are studiously avoided.

Creative method: Collide, juxtapose, overlap, counter intuition, intuition. Mindfulness, forgetfulness, remembering, repeat, repeat, repeat, undo – redo. Fuzzy logic, misinterpret. Hybridity.

There are no rules – but the ones you make yourself...

For me, pataphysics contains or embodies the closest or most compelling description of, or best framework for, what artists do - the structure(less) methods we employ.



Take the image away – there's your mountain...

'Pata-perception:

**perceive-something,
recognise-nothing,
conceive-anything,
cognise-everything...**

Not wild and fanciful.

My ideas pata-perception – grounded in experience – lived experience.

see Deleuze's "How Jarry's Pataphysics Opened the Way for Phenomenology"

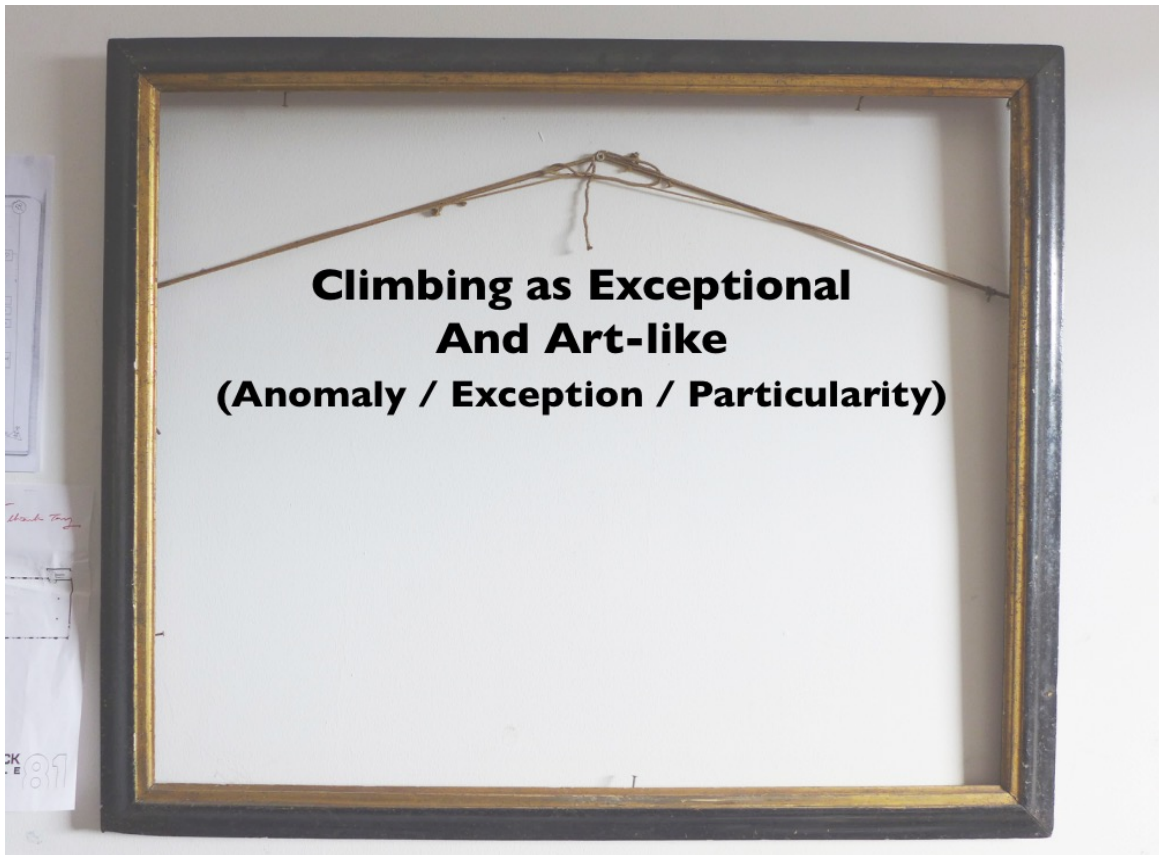
In short:

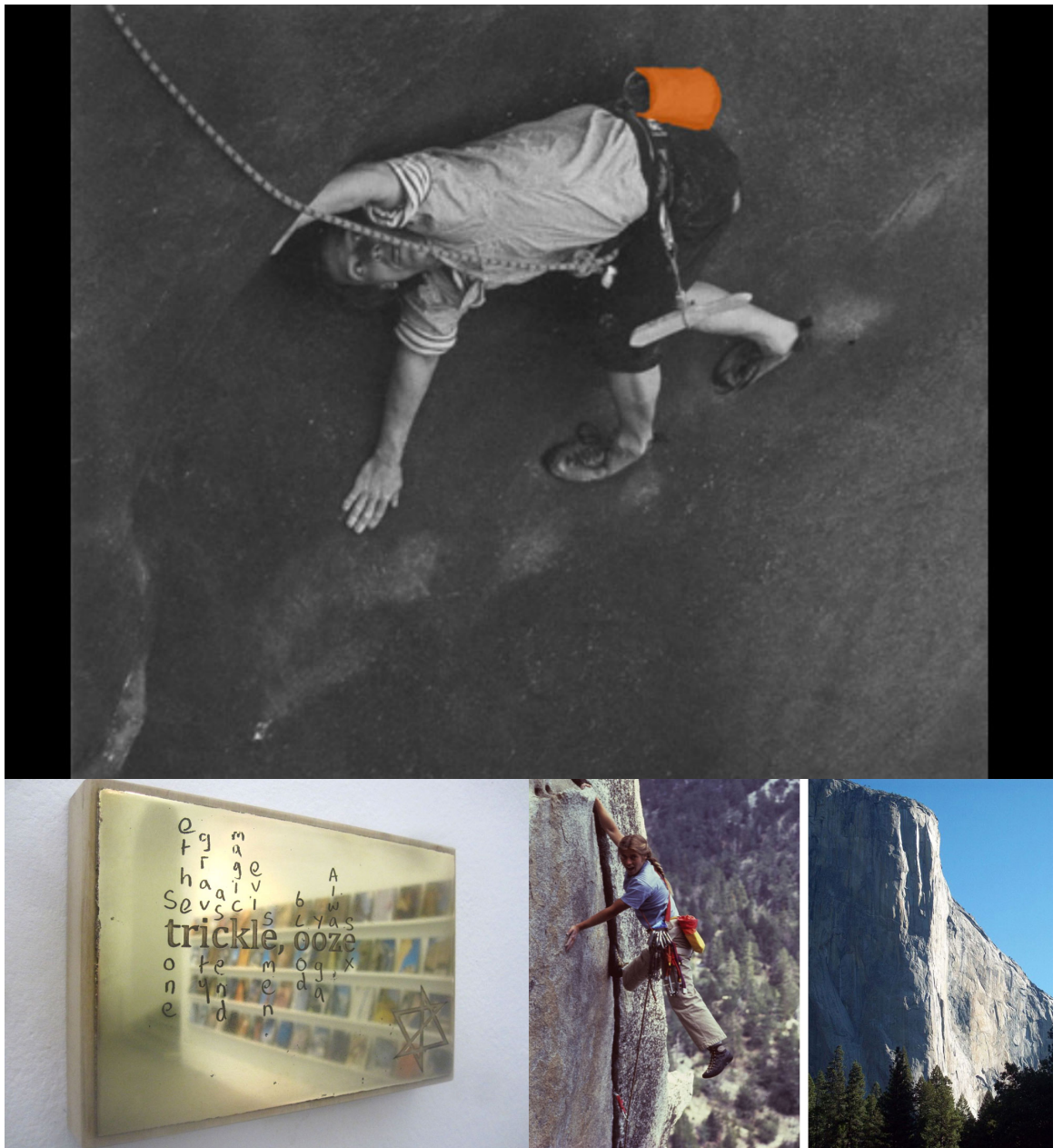
"An approach to experimentally intervene with perception or processing perception or lived experience."

Or 'willfully seeing things and acting upon things differently'.

Some key aspects of my of 'pata-perception that I will speak about today are about:

- 1 Climbing as exceptional and art-like thing
- 2 Ubu-image (processing, intervening, disrupting, embodying) Vibrant nihilism
- 3 Lateral practice (crossdisciplinary, collision, horizontal histories, contagions)





Landscape Empiricist approach – Berkley

" We only know the thing we are looking at through the frame of the means by which we look at it."

Climbing performs this for me

- so I'm interested in climbing and mountaineering as a framework through which we understand mountains and rocky places - landscape.

In this landscape the image less important (nose against rock).

Shift away from **conventional landscape** in my work.

Climbing brings **something different** – even than walking, running or biking – it's so hands on, tactile, physically located and psychological – so offers a lot of rich territory for re-thinking landscape in quite a radical way.

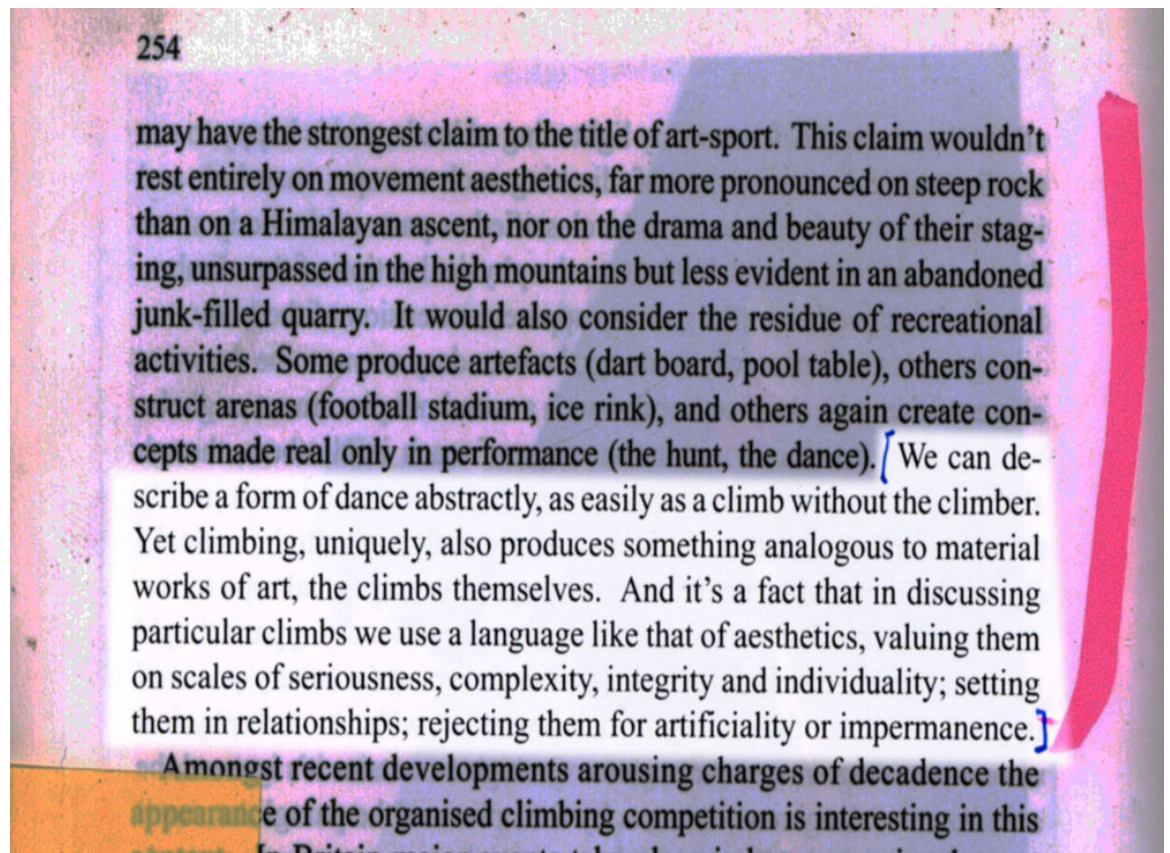
The **difference-ness** of climbing – what it brings to landscape (more often townfolk not deep ruralists)

Denham Quarry – the landscape not as epic and big NATURE. Quite urban and gritty.

Climbing as spirit of the Avant Garde (In geographer Stephen Daniels' recent book *Landscape*, 2015). That's an interesting thought –as I would argue that interest in climbing is that it can be very different than many other ways of engaging the landscape.

Not sure he quite meant this....(1920's AAvante Garde theatre). But I think he was describing the changing attitude of climbing and climbers in the mid-late 20th Century in relation to society or the mainstream.

Set aside from the norms of society. 60's 70's 80's - Dawes. Pritchard, Redhead, Fowler, Whillans, Brown, Bancroft, Perrin, Bridwell



Avant garde – pataphysical...

Climbing as art-like thing: Harold Drasdo...text (Welsh Climber. *Ordinary Route* 1997) We can describe the form of a dance abstractly, as easily as a climb without the climber. Yet climbing, uniquely, also produces something analogous to material works of art, the climbs themselves. And it's a fact that in discussing particular climbs we use a language like that of aesthetics, valuing them on scales of seriousness, complexity, integrity and individuality; setting them in relationships; rejecting them for artificiality or impermanence.

This nails it as: what is particular, peculiar about climbing and it's the climbs themselves.

The climb as a specific cultural thing or form – **THE ROUTE**

Routes as constructed, created human things:

Strapadictomy - great example – devious wordplay

Route Titles are a brilliant example of the pataphysical spirit in climbing.

Routes are authored - titled, dated,

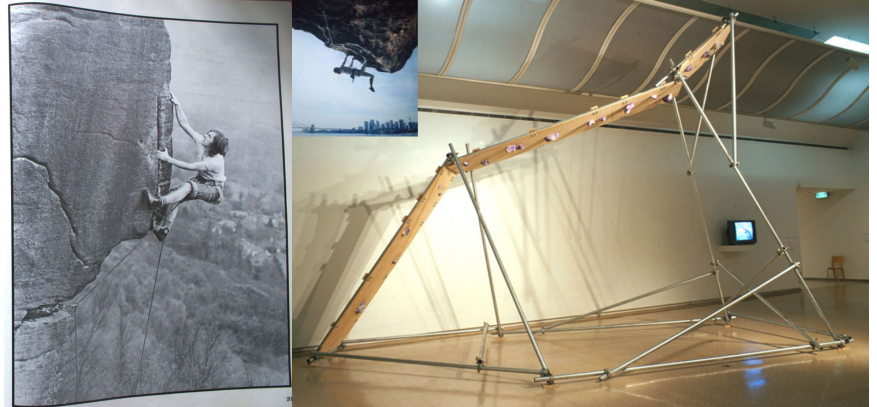
Routes are graded in terms of technical ability required but also aesthetic grading - star system.

They are also documents, texts and verbal artifacts – in guidebooks, online, conversations.

The Route is central to the whole culture of climbing.

Routes could be thought of....drawings, sculptures, performances.

Strapadictomy ***
E5 6a
John Allen
1976

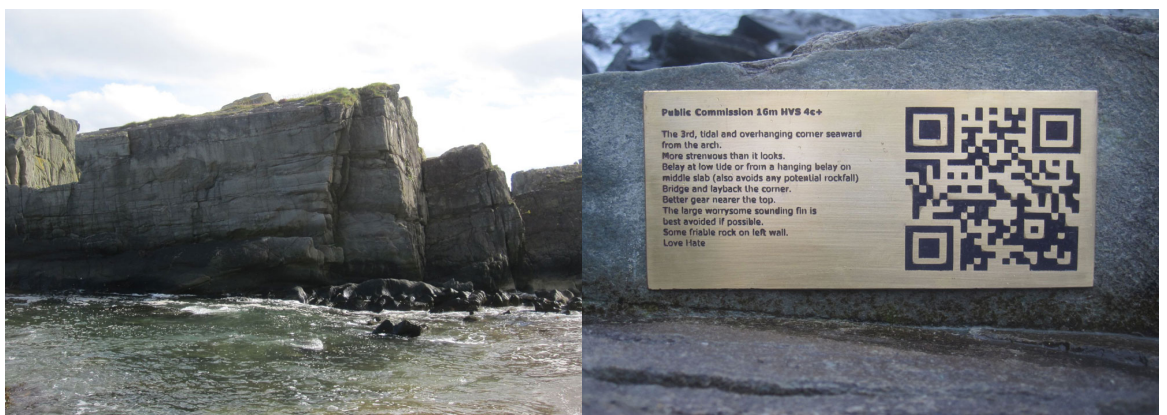


Gecko Roof (2000) (Dan Shippersides) Sydney MCA - Overhanging route in Sydney Harbor - illegal.

Landscape as movement - our physical passage / engagement – rather than what it looks like.

Quite **tight methodology** – very focused and precise – reducing aesthetic possibilities – reducing scope of reading or meaning (but in this possibly expanding - the world in a grain of sand etc) – and adding the potential engagement to include kinesthetic.

Systems – structural approaches, **pragmatic methods** based on logic and rational thinking as well as intuition, vision and talent: but towards ways to get into **wilder and crazy situations**. (this could describe art)



Public Commission 2011 (Dan Shippersides) - a new route as a public artwork...? Dance, movement workshops - and coastal camping collaborative residency with Echo Echo Dance. Lots of climbing and I made new route.

Public Funding.
Climbing as art??

Thinking of a climb as a Public Art work:

– how have / do people engage with it

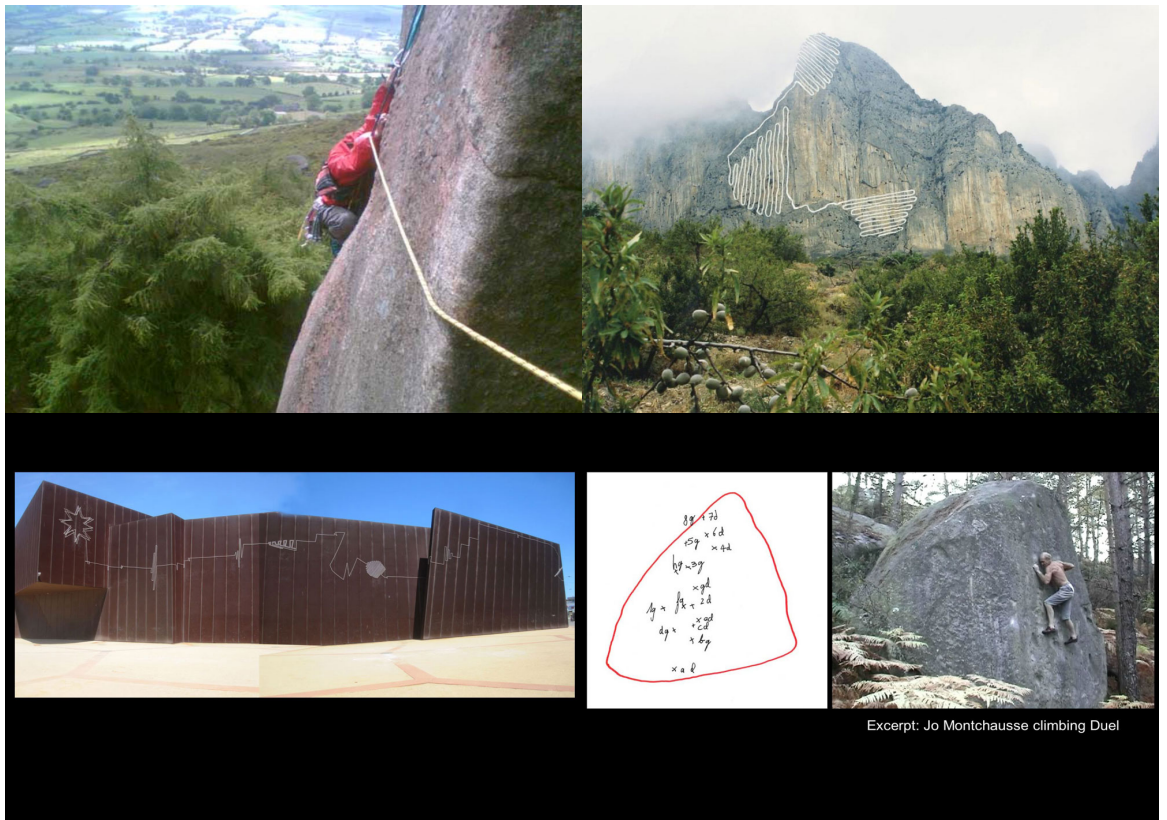
- what different modes of access or 'consumption'?
- how many have actually climbed it???
- seen it for real,?
- seen the guide book?
- seen the website?
- heard the stories etc etc. ?
- purest/fullest mode of engagement? – climbing it.
- Forms of engagement and access?
- Responsibility of the Artist? Health & Safety?

Interesting thoughts about access to creative knowledge or beauty - and danger. Some cave art placed in very inaccessible and dangerous parts of the cave systems - as if to limit access or heighten the experience of the encounter with the art / knowledge / experience.

Drawing: - the rope and protection....

'stitching' to the rock the rope makes a line drawing.

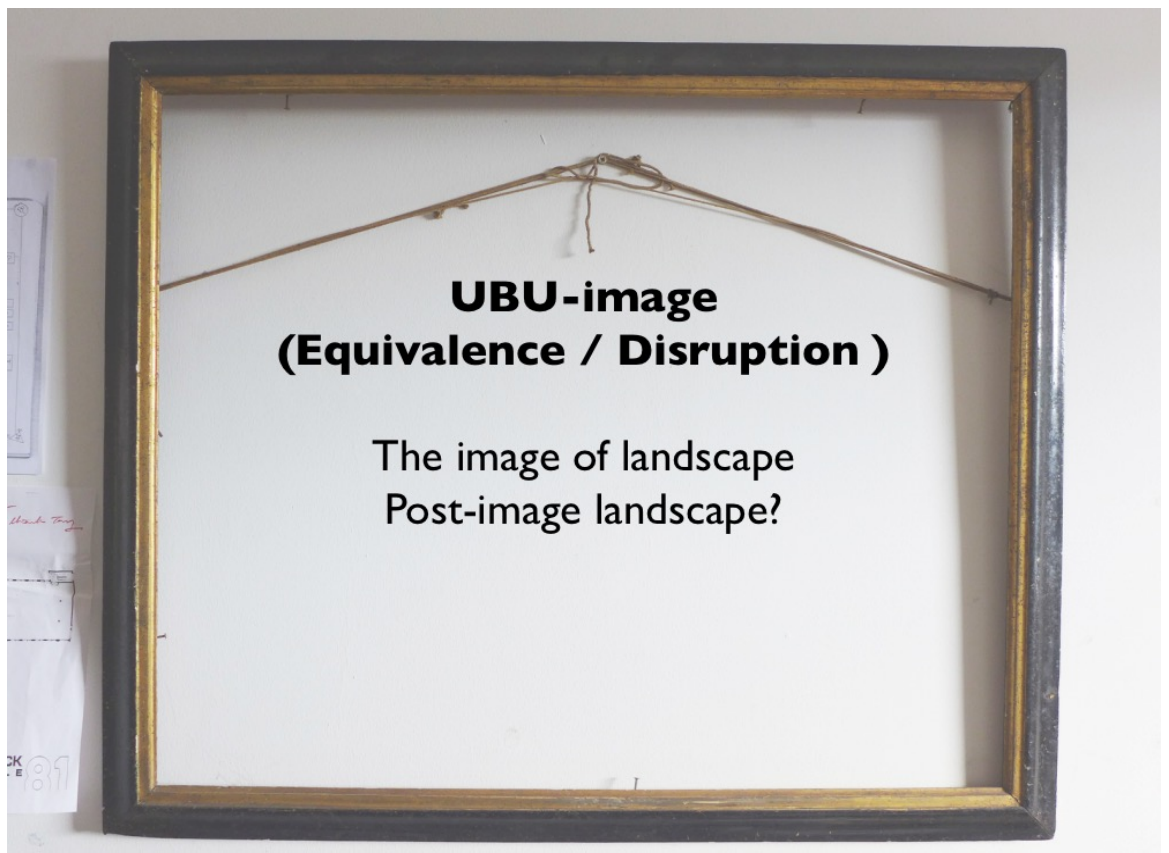
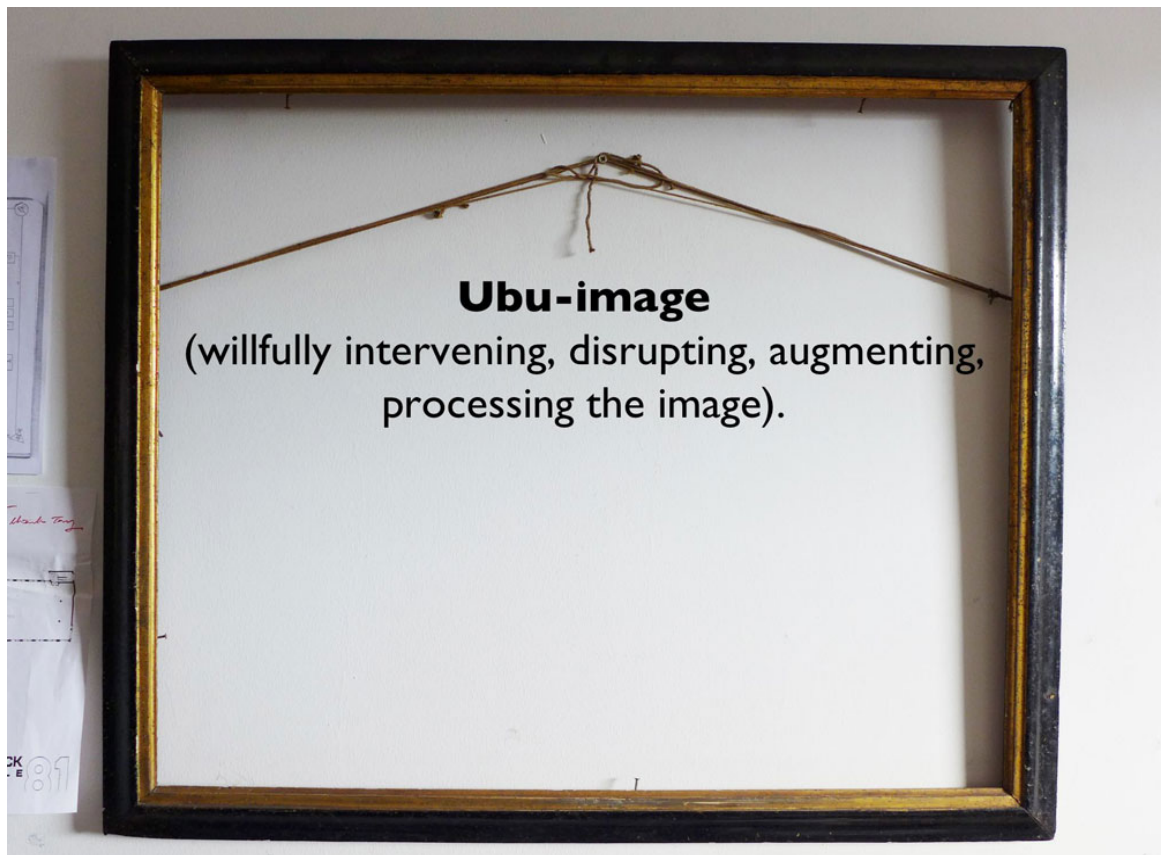
Paul Klee – taking a line for a walk. Taking a rope for a climb.



The DUEL: a problem (a climb in called a problem in bouldering).
Jo Montchausee - Font. Math professor.

Creativity in how you address a problem - Drawing – mathematical problem.
Cezanne??

Setting PROBLEMS for ourselves: Creative process and solutions (Imaginary Solutions)



Ubu is a character in Jarry's proto 'pataphysical plays who is hell bent on wrecking stuff. He's the nihilistic force that destroys decorum and literally assault the status-quo by attempting to become it in his own dysfunctional manner.

Ubu-image - IMAGE DISTRUPTION - Problems with IMAGE.

Ok so here I could make a feminist argument that the landscape is gendered by the male gaze (as **Gillian Rose** makes in her essay The Landscape, The Gaze and Masculinity, 1993). And which I think this is true to an extent and perhaps

controversially I also think climbing (despite its often perceived masculinity...) could offer a more intimate pansexual embodied possibility of re-imagining the act of climbing as dissolving the object-subject relationship between man and nature. But that's not for today....luckily for you...

BUT One of the problems is that the image nature of contemporary life is commodified – it's now at a saturated point where our adventure and freedom is colonized and commodified into the spectacular.

Taking aspects of critique from **GUY DEBORD's** (Society of the Spectacle 1969)

- the spectacle is a problem
- the spectacle of adventure,
- the spectacle of nature
- the spectacle of looking itself
- it makes us passive,
- it steals our responsibility,
- it makes us consumers,

- it seduces us to believe the image is the real thing.

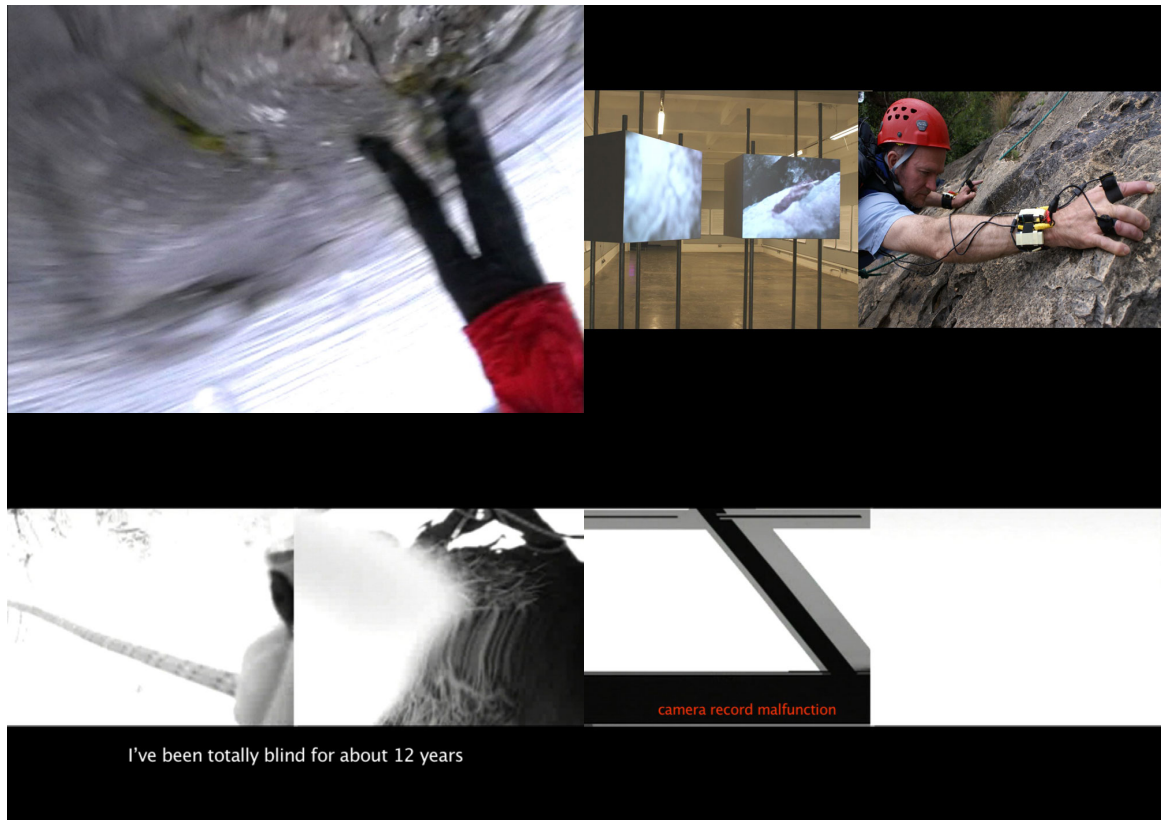
If we think of the landscape / adventure image in relation to mountain activity in terms of speed and market economy:

- quite a fast start...Grand Tour sketches and painting very popular
- up and running...Whymper etchings 1st ascent of the Matterhorn – 1871
- on the bike now...with Abrahams Bro's photos
- an engine is introduced...(the camera)
- well into 2nd gear High magazine, MOUNTAIN Magazine 70, 80s and mid 90's
- 5th gear On The Edge magazine 90's
- dial up modem speed UKClimbing website sets up online
- your desktop screen and TV
- online, social media, vimeo, youtube
- the image has reached hyperspeed
- warp factor 9
- and it's right there in your pocket.

dumb and predictable imagery

But the main thing is, thinking about landscape, **LANDSCAPE ISN'T JUST SOMETHING WE LOOK AT!** – we have to start by getting that 'landscape' image out of the way – and allow things like physicality, space, social, the wider culture to come into it.

The image actually keeps us out of that space. SO WE NEED TO UBU IT!



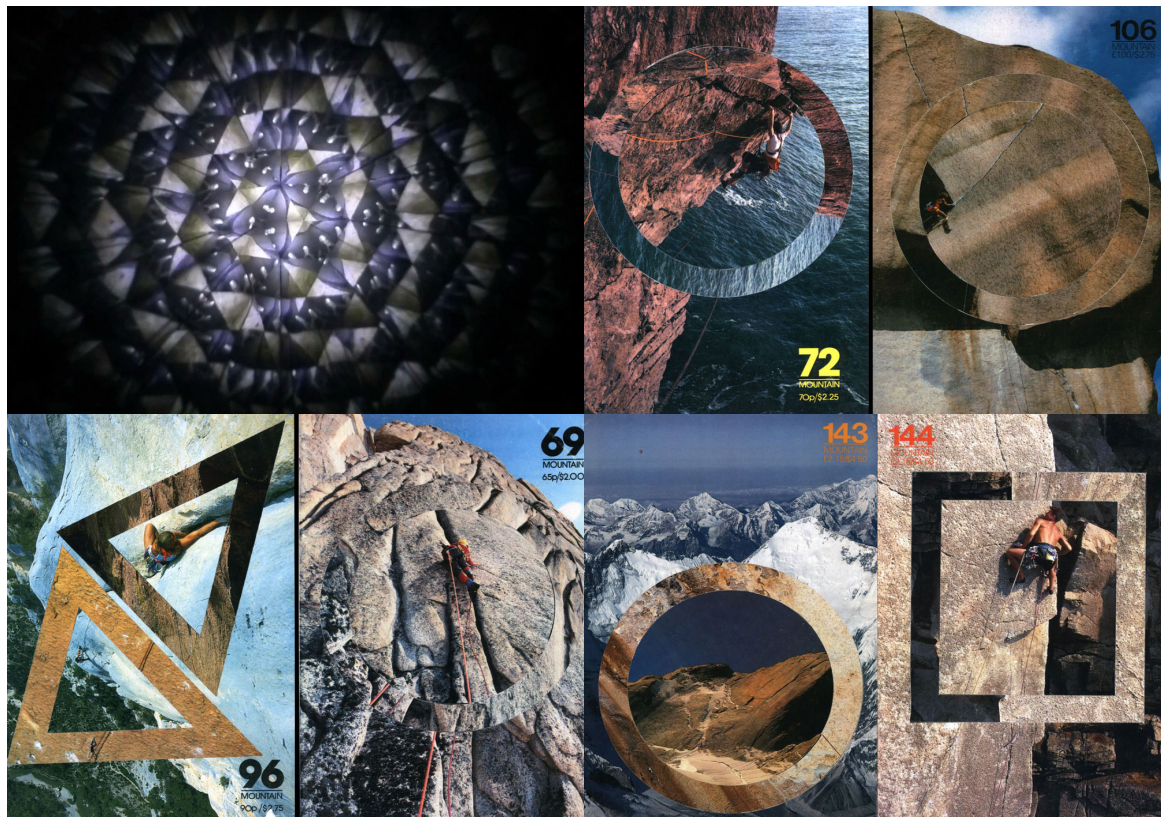
Touchstone – 18months climbing with a blindman - John

– finger cameras

– so the camera direction if you like is dictated by tactility and movement.

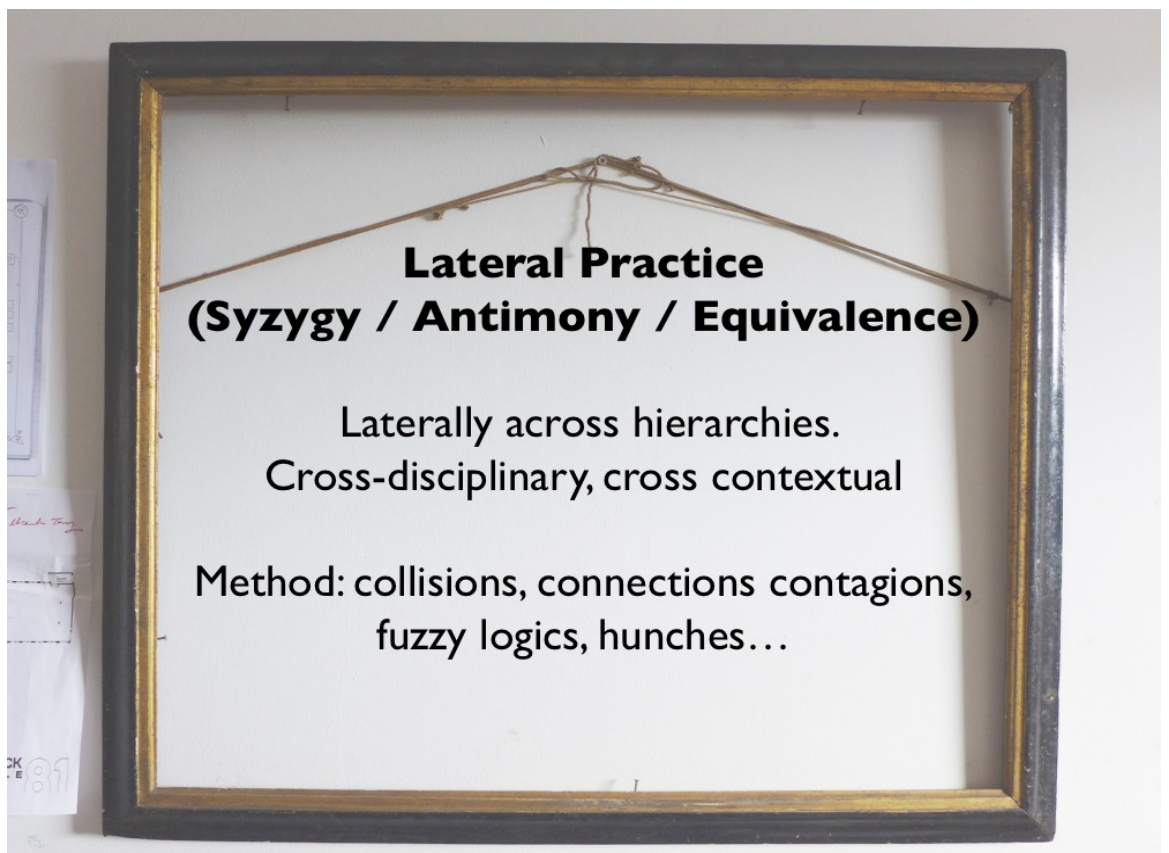
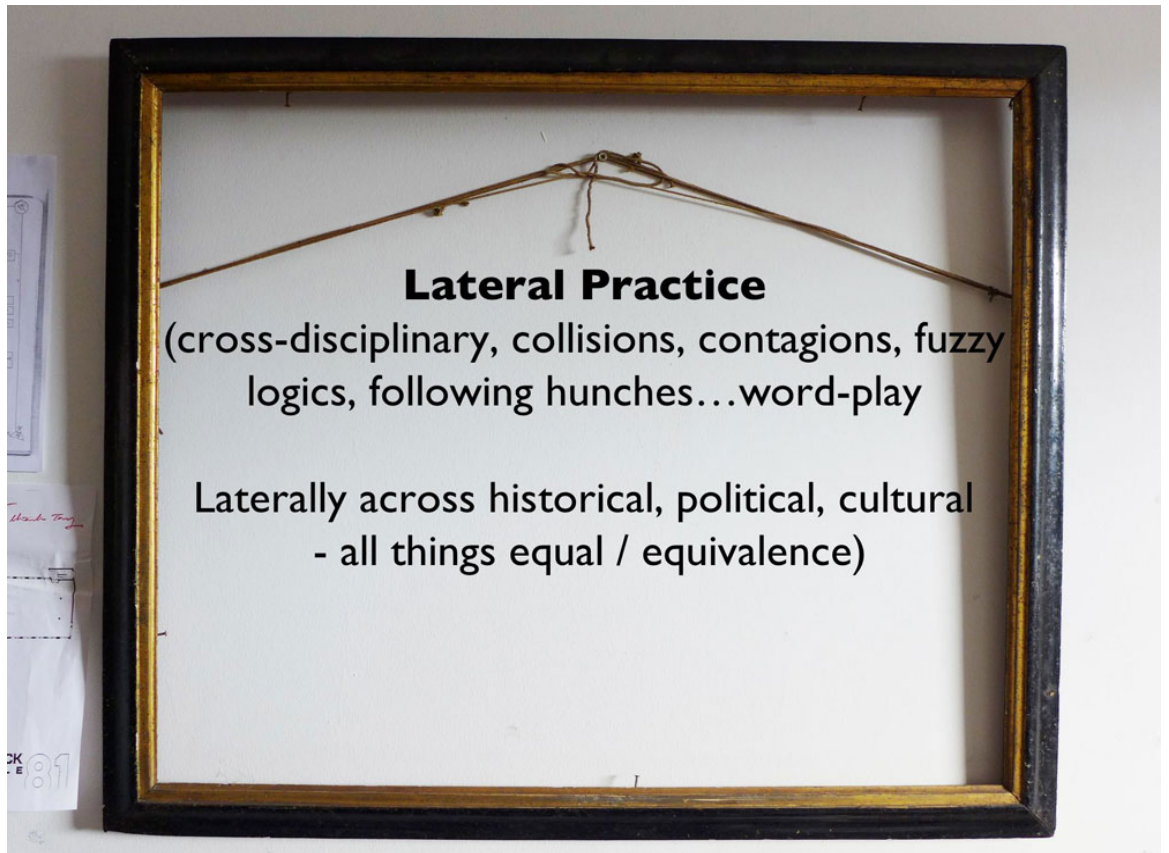
(avoiding the organizing principles of the eye)

Collapsing vision (the **cameras breakdown and malfunction - seemed perfect result** - and in away really make the artwork)



Shifting the encounter with the image.

BRINGS THE VIEWER INTO AN ENCOUNTER (or adventure) **WITH THE HERE AND NOW AESTHETIC** – rather than the receiver of an **IMAGE SPACE** elsewhere



LATERAL PRACTICE

- **syzygy** coming together of disparate things.

Beyond it's expected genre, topic, category or boundary – expand where it might connect or resonate.

Connect through points of commonality.

Climbing and Art are a good example of **Lateral Practice**

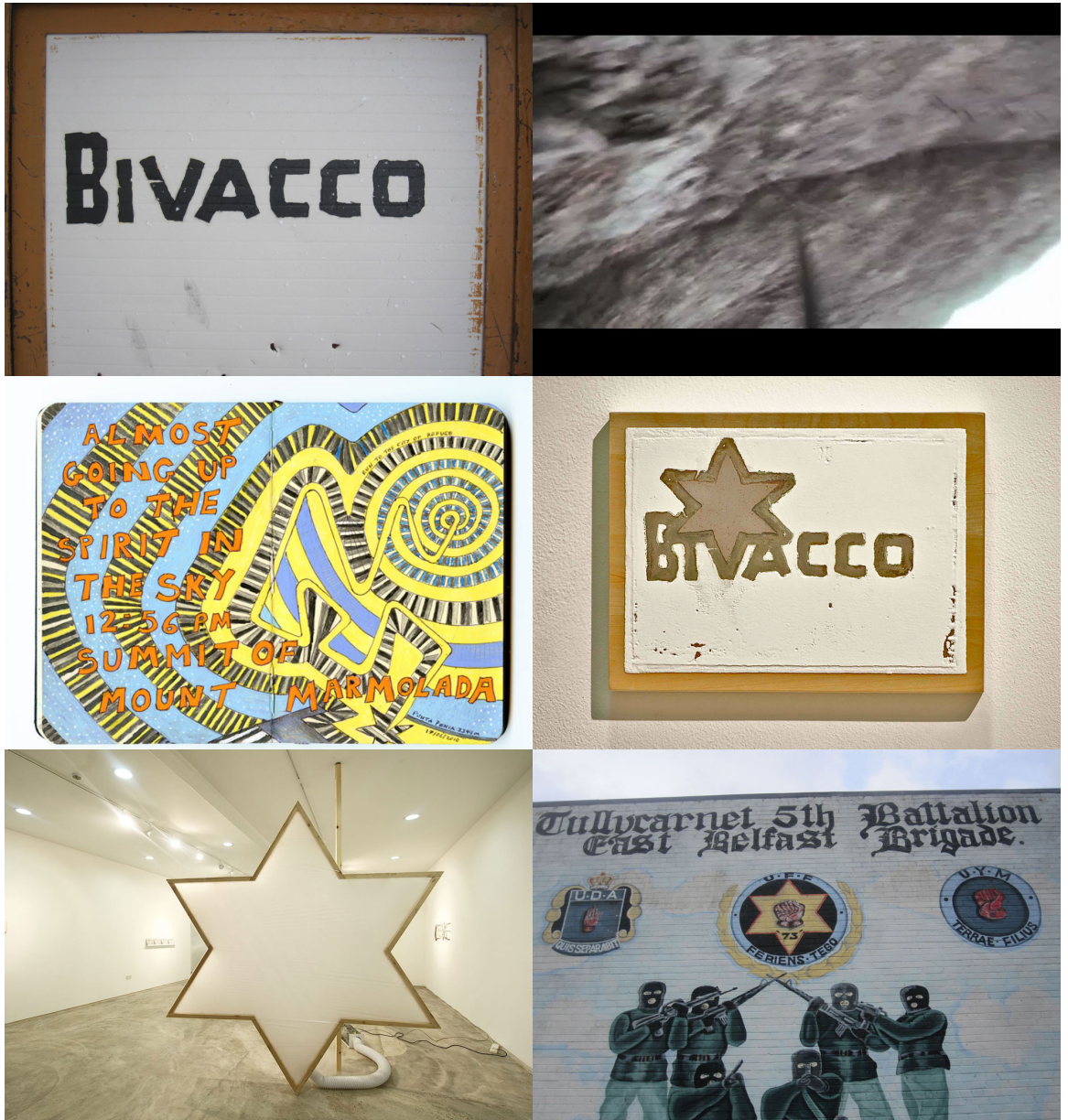
– but you can also understand the principle within themes and ideas of creative processes.

Sliding across different ideas.

Horizontal / Lateral (rhizomatic) rather than vertical (History - the Canon)

The following sequence is a set of lateral syzygys and odd connections - starting with a lightening strike on a mountain in the Italian Dolomites.

Notes not needed - speak about the work.





YUPA STAR - some kind of a memorial, 2012



'pata-perception – synthesizing terms

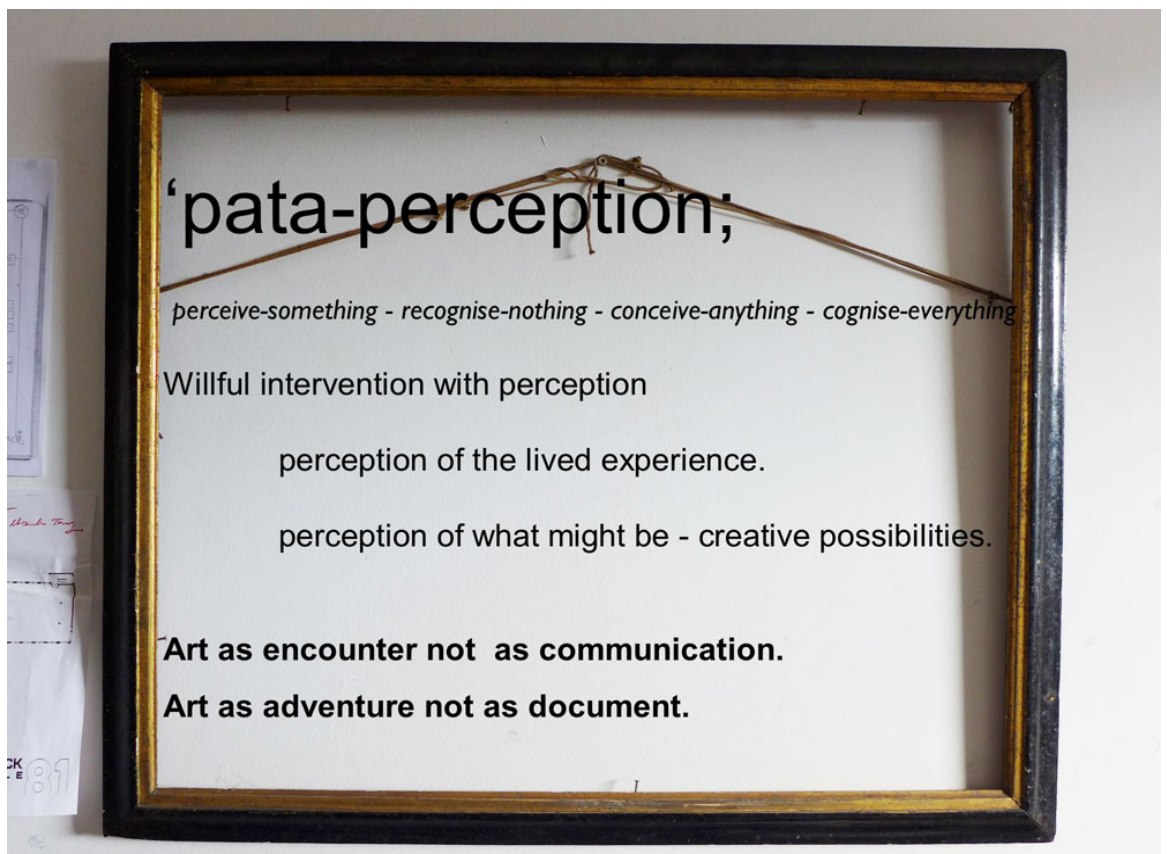
Anomaly (EXCEPTIONAL, PARTICULAR, SINGULAR)

Antimony (gladly holding CONTRADICTION)

Ubu Image – (DISRUPTION, TRANSFORMATION)

Equivalence (LATERAL PRACTICE – blurring of object / subject boundaries)

Syzygy (coming together of DISPARATE entities – unpredicted significances)



'pata-perception

Geography must become *beautiful, wherein the entirety of its embrace is aligned to emancipation.*

Simon Springer 2016